REMARKS

The Examiner objected to the claims 1-20 as being anticipated by Benowitz et al. (US Publication No. 2003/0236847). The Examiner argued that Benowitz teaches that if no authorization code is detected 156, the CAS will determine 160 whether the sender is on an exclusion list by comparing the email address, IP address and/or MAC address of the sender with the same identifying information on the exclusion list. Applicant respectfully traverses this objection and has amended the claims to clarify the differences of Benowitz et al.

Benowitz et al. is directed towards a communication authorization system ("CAS") that determines whether incoming communications should be allowed to reach the intended recipient by checking the communication for a proper communication authorization code. The communication authorization code is a code set by the CAS and communicated to the sender for inclusion in any communications sent by the sender. The CAS includes an authorization code system that maintains, administers and transmits the authorization codes to future senders (paras. 71-73).

The Examiner has directed the applicant to paragraphs 8, 10, 87, 91, 93 and 102 of Bewnowitz et al. These paragraphs describe the use of an exclusion list containing either an acceptable email address (paragraphs 8 and 10), or a list of acceptable authorization codes (paragraphs 87, 91, 93 and 102). As explained in Benowitz et al., these exclusion lists are generated by the user housing a list of acceptable email addresses (paragraph 8), the recipient manually screening incoming mail (paragraph 10), user or system defined rules (paragraph 87) and, the sender adds a valid authorization code to the email message (paragraph 91). Operation of the exclusion lists are described as being maintained by the CAS or outside and independent of the CAS (paragraph 93) and, a mail server stripping an authorization code from an incoming mail message before passing the code and the address to a database server (paragraph 102).

Benowitz et al. teaches the addition of an authorization code by the sender to an email message to be sent and authorized. The sender first obtains the authorization code by: i) contacting the intended recipient via non-system communication to obtain a proper authorization code; or, ii)

contacting a notification/authorization service via the user interface to obtain a proper authorization code. (paragraph 63)

The CAS does not store sender information in at least one recipient permitted sender database, and store sender information associated with all members of a recipient group in at least one recipient group permitted sender database. The CAS does not determine whether the sender has been authorized by the recipient and if the sender has not been authorized by the recipient, comparing sender information in the email message received from the sender with corresponding sender information stored in the recipient group PSD to determine if the recipient group has authorized the sender. The CAS does not decide to forward an email message on the basis that another user, a member of a recipient group, has authorized the sender. The CAS does not add sender information stored in the recipient group PSD to the recipient PSD.

The present invention does not rely upon pre-determined authorization codes to authenticate incoming communications. Further, the present invention does not screen all communications to only permit communications containing a pre-determined authorization code that was added to the email message by the sender. The present invention provides for a system for forwarding email messages wherein an incoming message is forwarded through to the intended recipient if the sender information in the message matches sender information in either the recipient's permitted sender database, or sender information in at least one recipient group permitted sender database of which the recipient is a member. Thus, the present invention allows for the receipt of an email where either the recipient has approved the sender, or a member of the recipient group has approved the sender. The present invention does not require the sender to include a separate authorisation code in his/her email, and allows messages to be forwarded that were not pre-authorized by the sender, but were pre-authorized by a member of the at least one recipient group.

The applicant has amended independent claims 1 and 11 to clarify that there is provided a system for selectively blocking email messages sent by a sender over a communications network to a recipient without requiring prior communication between the sender and the recipient; and, a

Application No.: 10/761,308   - 8 -   September 14, 2007

method of selectively blocking email messages sent by a sender over a communications network to a recipient without requiring prior communication between the sender and the recipient.

The amendments further clarify that the decision to forward the email message is determined by the sender having been authorized by either the recipient or at least one member of the recipient group of which the recipient is a member. Support for the amendments is found at paragraphs 8 and 26.

Having regard to the above, favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully requested. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any required fees, including the RCE fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), to our Deposit Account No. 500663.

Executed at Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on September 14, 2007.

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